

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method for enabling perception of multiple online personas including at least a first persona and a second persona of a user in an instant messaging communications session of an instant messaging communications service that enables communications from the user to other identities of users of the instant messaging service, the method comprising:

~~identifying at least two identities within a communications environment to whom messages may be directed;~~

registering a textual identifier with an online service provider to enable instant messaging communications sessions involving the single textual identifier;

maintaining several different manifestations of the single textual identifier to be concurrently projected to other users;

~~enabling the first persona of the user to be projected to a first of the identities;~~

~~concurrently enabling the second persona of the same user to be projected to a second of the identities, wherein the first persona is at least partially distinguishable from the second persona within the instant messaging communications service;~~

projecting [[the]] a first persona of the manifestations of the user single textual identifier to [[the]] a first of the identities other users; and

concurrently projecting [[the]] a second persona of the manifestations of the user single textual identifier to [[the]] a second of the identities other users,

wherein the first persona and the second persona are projected using the instant messaging communications service manifestations comprise at least one of a displayable user icon, avatar, and graphical representation.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating the first ~~persona~~ manifestation with a first group of ~~identities~~ other users so that the first ~~persona~~ manifestation is projected to members of the first group of ~~identities~~ other users in a communications session, wherein the first of the ~~identities~~ other users is included within the first group of ~~identities~~ other users.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2 further comprising associating the second ~~persona~~ manifestation with a second group of ~~identities~~ other users so that the second ~~persona~~ manifestation is projected to members of the second group of ~~identities~~ other users in a communications session, wherein the second of the ~~identities~~ other users is included within the second group of ~~identities~~ other users.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating a ~~persona~~ manifestation with the first of the ~~identities~~ other users and associating a different ~~persona~~ manifestation with a group of the ~~identities~~ other users with which the first of the ~~identities~~ other users is associated, wherein the first ~~persona~~ manifestation projected to the first of the ~~identities~~ other users comprises an amalgamation of the ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the first of the ~~identities~~ other users and the different ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the group of the ~~identities~~ other users.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4 wherein the ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the first of the ~~identities~~ other users overrides the different ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the group of the ~~identities~~ other users to the extent a conflict exists.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating a global ~~persona~~ manifestation with each of the ~~identities~~ other users and associating a different ~~persona~~ manifestation with a group of the ~~identities~~ other users with which the first of the ~~identities~~ other users is associated, wherein the first ~~persona~~ manifestation projected to the first of the ~~identities~~ other users comprises an amalgamation of the global ~~persona~~ manifestation

associated with each of the ~~identities~~ other users and the different ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the group of the ~~identities~~ other users.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6 wherein the global ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with each of the ~~identities~~ other users is overridden by the different ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the group of the ~~identities~~ other users to the extent a conflict exists.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating a global ~~persona~~ manifestation with each of the ~~identities~~ other users and associating a different ~~persona~~ manifestation with the first of the ~~identities~~ other users, wherein the first ~~persona~~ manifestation projected to the first of the ~~identities~~ other users comprises an amalgamation of the global ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with each of the ~~identities~~ other users and the different ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the first of the ~~identities~~ other users.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8 wherein the global ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with each of the ~~identities~~ other users is overridden by the different ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the first of the ~~identities~~ other users to the extent a conflict exists.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating an individual ~~persona~~ manifestation with the first of the ~~identities~~ other users, associating a group ~~persona~~ manifestation with a group of the ~~identities~~ other users with which the first of the ~~identities~~ other users is associated, and associating a global ~~persona~~ manifestation with each of the ~~identities~~ other users, wherein the first ~~persona~~ manifestation projected to the first of the ~~identities~~ other users comprises an amalgamation of the individual ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the first of the ~~identities~~ other users, the group ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the group of the ~~identities~~ other users, and the global ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with each of the ~~identities~~ other users.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10 wherein the individual ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the first of the ~~identities~~ other users overrides the group ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the group of the ~~identities~~ other users and the group ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with the group of the ~~identities~~ other users overrides the global ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with each of the ~~identities~~ other users, to the extent a conflict exists.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the communications session comprises an instant messaging communications session.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12 wherein the ~~identities~~ other users are members of a buddy list, the buddy list including the online presence state of the ~~identities~~ other users.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising selecting among the first and second ~~personas~~ manifestations for projection to a particular one of the ~~identities~~ other users based on an attribute of the particular ~~identity~~ other user.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving from the ~~user~~ account a selection of at least the first and second ~~persona~~ manifestations.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising selecting the first ~~persona~~ manifestation based upon an attribute of the first ~~identity~~ other user.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising configuring the ~~persona~~ manifestation assigned to the first ~~identity~~ other user to change based upon the occurrence of a predetermined event.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event is based upon a time of day.

20. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event is based upon a day of the week.

21. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event is based the passage of a pre-determined interval of time.

22. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event comprises a weather condition at a predetermined geographic location.

23. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the pre-determined event comprises communication of a predetermined word.

24. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined emoticon.

25. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined date.

26. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined number of instant messages from the first ~~identity~~ other user.

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the ~~persona~~ manifestation assigned to the first ~~identity~~ other user is configured to change at random among more than one selected ~~personas~~ manifestation.

28. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the ~~user~~ textual identifier comprises a potential instant messaging sender, the first ~~identity~~ other user comprises a first

potential instant messaging recipient, and the first ~~persona~~ manifestation is rendered to the first potential instant messaging recipient before communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

29. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the ~~user~~ textual identifier comprises a potential instant messaging sender, the first ~~identity~~ other user comprises a first potential instant messaging recipient, and the first ~~persona~~ manifestation is rendered to the first potential instant messaging recipient after communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

30. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method for enabling perception of multiple online ~~personas~~ manifestations in an instant messaging communications session, the method comprising:

rendering, on an instant messaging recipient system, an instant messaging application user interface for an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving at least two potential instant messaging recipients and a single potential instant messaging sender;

registering a textual identifier with the online service provider to represent the single potential communications sender;

receiving a first message that includes a first text message and a first ~~persona~~ manifestation to be displayed by a first potential instant messaging recipient when perceiving the first message, the first ~~persona~~ manifestation being selected by an instant messaging sender system from among multiple pre-defined ~~persona~~ manifestations for the single potential instant messaging sender, each ~~persona~~ manifestation comprising a collection of one or more self-expression items;

rendering the first ~~persona~~ manifestation at the instant messaging recipient system when rendering a portion of the first message;

receiving a second message that includes a second text message and a second ~~persona~~ manifestation to be displayed by a second potential instant messaging recipient when perceiving the second message, the second ~~persona~~ manifestation being selected by the instant messaging

sender system from among multiple pre-defined persona manifestations for the single potential instant messaging sender and being at least partially distinguishable from the first persona manifestation, each persona manifestation comprising a collection of one or more self-expression items and the textual identifier; and

rendering the second persona manifestation at the instant messaging recipient system when rendering a portion of the second message.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 wherein the first and second personas manifestations are rendered before communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

32. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 wherein the first and second personas manifestations are rendered after communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

33. (Original) The method of claim 30 in which self-expression items comprise one or more of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, an emoticon, and a sound.

34. (Cancelled)

35. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 further comprising:
assigning the first persona manifestation to the first potential instant messaging recipient so that the first persona manifestation is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving the first potential instant messaging recipient; and
assigning the second persona manifestation to the second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second persona manifestation is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving the second potential instant messaging recipient.

36. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 further comprising:
assigning the first ~~persona~~ manifestation to a first group of potential instant messaging recipients so that the first ~~persona~~ manifestation is thereafter automatically invoked and projected in an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving a member of the first group of potential instant messaging recipients; and
assigning the second ~~persona~~ manifestation to a second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second ~~persona~~ manifestation is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving the second potential instant messaging recipient.

37. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 wherein a ~~persona~~ manifestation is selected for use in an online service provider instant messaging communications session with a potential instant messaging recipient according to a hierarchy of selection.

38. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 wherein selecting the ~~persona~~ manifestation according to a hierarchy of selection comprises:
first selecting a ~~persona~~ manifestation assigned to the potential instant messaging recipient if available;
next selecting a ~~persona~~ manifestation assigned to a group containing the potential instant messaging recipient, if available; and
next selecting a default ~~persona~~ manifestation, if available.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 wherein selecting the ~~persona~~ manifestation according to a hierarch of selection comprises appending one or more self-expression items of a higher-ranked ~~persona~~ manifestation to self-expression items of a lower-ranked ~~persona~~ manifestation.

40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 wherein selecting the ~~persona~~ manifestation according to a hierarch of selection comprises replacing one or more self-

expression items of a lower-ranked ~~persona~~ manifestation with self-expression items of a higher-ranked ~~persona~~ manifestation.

41. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 further comprising locking a ~~persona~~ manifestation to a potential instant messaging recipient so as to guard against unintended ~~persona~~ manifestation switching.

42. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 further comprising forbidding a ~~persona~~ manifestation to be assigned to a potential instant messaging recipient so as to guard against unintended ~~persona~~ manifestation switching.

43. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 further comprising changing a ~~persona~~ manifestation assigned a potential instant messaging recipient while conversing with the potential instant messaging recipient in an instant messaging communications session.

44. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 further comprising receiving a ~~persona~~ manifestation associated with a potential instant messaging recipient and saving the received ~~persona~~ manifestation.

45. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 wherein a ~~persona~~ manifestation is provided by a third party.

46. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 wherein a ~~persona~~ manifestation assigned to a potential instant messaging recipient is configured to change upon the occurrence of a predetermined event.

47. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises the passage of a pre-determined interval of time.

48. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises the passage of a pre-determined time of day.

49. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises a weather condition at a predetermined geographic location.

50. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the pre-determined event comprises a day of the week.

51. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined word.

52. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined emoticon.

53. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined date.

54. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined number of instant messages from the potential instant messaging recipient.

55. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 wherein a ~~persona~~ manifestation assigned to a potential instant messaging recipient is configured to change at random among more than one selected ~~persona~~ manifestations.

56. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method for enabling perception of multiple ~~persona~~ manifestations in a communications session, the method comprising:

rendering, on a communications recipient system, a communications application user interface for an online service provider communications session involving at least two potential communications recipients and a single potential communications sender;]

registering a textual identifier with the online service provider to represent the single potential communications sender;

receiving a first message that includes a first text message and a first persona manifestation to be displayed by a first potential communications recipient when perceiving the first message, the first persona manifestation being selected by a communications sender system from among multiple pre-defined persona manifestations for the single potential communications sender, each persona manifestation comprising a collection of one or more self-expression items;

rendering the first persona manifestation at the communications recipient system when rendering a portion of the first message;

receiving a second message that includes a second text message and a second persona manifestation to be displayed by a second potential communications recipient when perceiving the second message, the second persona manifestation being selected by the communications sender system from among multiple pre-defined persona manifestations for the single potential communications sender and being at least partially distinguishable from the first persona manifestation, each persona manifestation comprising a collection of one or more self-expression items and the textual identifier; and

rendering the second persona manifestation at the communications recipient system when rendering a portion of the second message.

57. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the first persona manifestation comprises at least one of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, an emoticon, and a sound and the second persona manifestation comprises at least one of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, an emoticon, and a sound.

58. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, wherein the first persona manifestation comprises at least one of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, an emoticon, and a sound and

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the second ~~persona~~ manifestation comprises at least one of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, an emoticon, and a sound.